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Author(s): Beverly Falk

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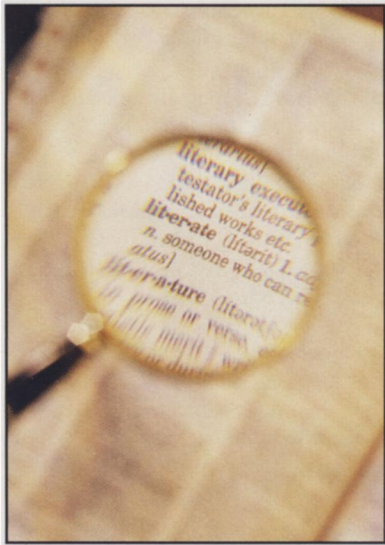
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Standards-Based Reforms: Problems and Possibilities



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BY BEVERLY FALK

AS STANDARDS-BASED reform sweeps the country, concerned educators grapple with how to help an increasingly diverse student population realize its academic and social potential. Likewise, concerned teacher educators struggle with how best to prepare teachers to meet this extraordinary challenge. Both tasks are especially complex because there are such vast differences in the initiatives being carried out in the name of standards-based reform. What marches under that banner varies significantly in content, in the types of assessment used, and in the kinds of accountability systems employed.

Too often and in too many places, standards-based reform is defined largely as making sure children do better on “tougher” and more extensive standardized paper-and-pencil tests. Sadly, this focus in many instances has helped reduce teaching to test preparation and the false pursuit of a “one-size-fits-all” approach to learning. Along the way it has fostered the adoption of practices that research of the last few decades has shown us can be detrimental to student learning: practices such as mandated, standardized, lockstep curricula; increased testing, especially in the primary grades; tracking by “ability”; and retention and

*BEVERLY FALK is an associate professor in the School of Education, City College, City University of New York. This article is drawn from her most recent book, *The Heart of the Matter: Using Standards and Assessments to Learn* (Heinemann, 2000).*

promotion decisions made on the basis of a single test result. In the name of ambitious-sounding reforms, such standards-based initiatives are exacerbating inequalities between students from different backgrounds and placing constraints on educators that undermine effective teaching.¹

Yet there *are* standards initiatives that are of considerable use to teaching and learning. In many instances, working with standards and standards-based assessments has stimulated teachers and their students to get clear about their purposes, to develop coherent goals for learning, and to make use of a range of instructional strategies that support students' varying approaches to learning. Examining and assessing students' work in relation to standards has helped teachers, students, and students' families to understand what students know and can do as well as how to support students' further learning. As a result of standards-based work, many educators and students have had opportunities for reflection and collaboration that they have never experienced before.²

Depending on how standards are shaped and used, standards-based reform can either support more ambitious teaching and greater levels of success for all students, or it can constrain teaching and professional decision making while creating higher rates of failure for those that the education system already serves least well. Below, I examine some of the critical challenges presented by standards-based reform, offer some examples of how standards and assessments have been used to enhance teacher and student learning, and discuss implications for teacher education.

CHALLENGES OF STANDARDS-BASED REFORM

Developing worthy standards. In the early part of the 20th century, Jean Piaget described the purpose of education as "the creation of men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what others have done — men and women who are creative, inventive, and discoverers . . . who can be critical, can verify, and not accept everything they are offered."³

If standards are to serve the learning of *all*, then they must be defined to promote the learning goals of *all*. The strengthening of our citizenry to build genuine democracy calls for standards that lead students to develop deep understandings about the world. Such standards encourage students to pose and solve problems that deal with issues of significance. They must take into consideration how children learn, be appropriate for different developmental stages, and be developed broadly enough to focus on essentials rather than on countless bits of information stu-

dents must memorize.

Standards that are grounded in such purposes can provide educators with common points of reference. By articulating common goals that are desirable for all students, standards can serve as a guide to important knowledge and skills. They can become frameworks that shape curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In so doing, standards can promote coherence across classrooms, schools, and districts while still allowing teachers and schools the freedom to make important decisions about how instruction and assessment should be carried out.

Standards-based approaches conceived in this way can actually free educators from standardizing their teaching methods and allow them to vary their practice to meet the needs of diverse student populations. The same standards can be taught through project-based learning in the community or through direct instruction in the classroom, depending on the school's orientation and the teachers' experience, confidence, creativity, or inspiration.

Teaching the way children learn. To help students achieve the powerful learning that is described in worthy standards, students need to be supported by effective teaching — teaching that is more than just preparation for a test. Students need to be supported by teaching that is informed by knowledge of how people learn, that connects knowledge and skill development in meaningful and purposeful contexts. Students need to be offered differentiated curricula that provide multiple pathways to learning, pathways that are appropriate to a variety of strengths and styles of learning and that take account of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Moreover, students need to learn in contexts that are rich with supporting materials and that provide a range of social relations and experiences in the real world. Students need to be in contexts that make use of the resources and "funds of knowledge" inherent in children's families and communities. Students need to know that their questions, their wonderings, their observations, and their inventions are valued, and they need help to connect themselves to the world and to ideas.

Assessing to inform and support learning. The teaching challenge cannot be fully met without addressing yet another challenge: developing and using assessments that inform teaching and support learning. Assessments that support student learning reveal what students know and can do, the strategies they use, and the understandings they bring to their learning. Such assessments help teachers make connections between what students already understand and what they are trying to learn.

Most traditional tests do not provide educators with this

kind of information. They offer only a limited — and sometimes misleading — view of students' proficiencies and progress. The nature and format of most standardized tests provide little opportunity for students to use higher-order thinking, to solve problems, or to apply their knowledge to real-world problems. The lack of context for the questions on many tests often disadvantages those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. With "right" or "wrong" answers as the only options, students' answers

to test questions give little indication of their thinking or of the strategies they use in their learning. When tests include multiple-choice items, the response options frequently distract test-takers from conveying what they understand, and they do not take into account the sometimes logical explanations for "incorrect" choices that test-takers make.

To truly serve learning, assessments are needed that have the capacity to capture the richness and fullness of what students understand and can do. Because accountability tests drive curriculum and instruction in schools more powerfully than any other factor, we need these kinds of performance-based assessments not only for accountability purposes but also to inform teaching. We need assessments and *systems* of assessment that make use of formats that call on students to demonstrate their knowledge in ways that are closer to those used in real life to solve problems, explain ideas, and apply understanding and skills. We need assessments that evaluate student progress by considering multiple forms of evidence of students' knowledge demonstrated in a range of ways.

However, even the best assessments can be harmful if they are not used wisely and well. Fair and equitable accountability policies and practices are needed if standards-based reforms are to serve the learning of students and teachers.

PROBLEMS IN DESIGNING ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES THAT SERVE LEARNING

In the best of cases, assessments used for accountability purposes are designed around standards that are worthy and challenging. Such assessments provide students with opportunities to explain their understandings and to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through performance. Such standards-based performance tests are a significant improvement over tests made up solely of multiple-

choice, fill-in-the-blank, or true/false items that are norm-referenced (designed to evaluate students in relation to the performance of their peers). However, there are numerous cases in which even well-designed standards and standards-based tests are couched in accountability policies

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and practices that are harmful to students, teachers, and learning.

Problem 1. Assessing new standards with old tests. Numerous accountability systems use tests that have little relation to the standards they are supposed to evaluate. As recently as 1999, at least 25 states that claimed to be implementing new standards were still using old-style, norm-referenced tests to measure student progress.⁴ Although the rhetoric of new and lofty standards is used when discussing what the tests measure, their actual content includes few performance items, and their formats provide scant opportunities for students to demonstrate the higher-order thinking of the new standards.

Even more problematic, however, is the fact that these so-called standards-based tests are actually evaluating students in norm-referenced ways. Recall that norm-referenced tests, designed to compare students' performance to that of their peers, are constructed to produce a bell curve of performance. That is, the tests are designed to ensure that half of the test-takers are above the mean, while the rest are below. It is literally impossible for *all* students to "succeed" in the context of a norm-referenced test. Such tests do not measure whether students have reached the learning goals specified in the standards. This mismatch between reform goals and how they are measured perpetuates the pattern of success for some and failure for others that standards-based reforms were created to end.

Problem 2. High-stakes testing causes harm. When high-stakes consequences are attached to tests, they hold the potential for great harm. Whether accountability tests are performance-based and embody challenging standards, whether they are multiple-choice and dominated by basic facts and skills, whether they are norm-referenced or standards-referenced, many states and districts around the country are attaching high stakes to test results that dramatically influence how the tests affect teaching.

High test scores have always reaped rewards for students in the form of placement in high tracks or groups, which then gives them access to special opportunities. The recent national push for high standards and accountability has seen the creation of additional incentives. In some districts and states children are being offered actual monetary rewards for reading books or attaining high test scores. In other locales students are offered free or reduced college tuition in exchange for achieving high scores on tests.⁵

On the other hand, students who score low on the tests are currently facing unprecedented “tough consequences.” Despite the substantial body of evidence that points to the harmful effects of retaining students in grade and despite the urgings of national experts and commissions to rely less on standardized testing and more on broader measures of student progress when making high-stakes decisions, many districts are enacting “no promotion” policies for students who do not meet the proficiency standard set as passing for their tests. As of the end of the 2000-01 school year, 18 states and the District of Columbia were linking promotion to performance on state exams. And 13 of those states also required some form of intervention, such as summer school, for students at risk of failing. These retention policies have led, in turn, to increases in special education placements and high school dropout rates.⁶

Students are not the only targets of high-stakes testing. Teachers and administrators are also under intense scrutiny and are being offered rewards and threatened with sanctions depending on the test scores of their students. Many states and districts are tying salary increases to the student test scores of individual teachers. Kentucky, for example, gives teachers rewards for the performance of their students on state tests. In some districts, superintendents are receiving bonuses in the tens of thousands of dollars for each year during their tenure that test scores go up. In addition, decisions about continuing contracts for school personnel are frequently being tied to student performance on tests.

These policies of sanctions and rewards are also being extended to whole schools. In Chicago, teachers and principals can be reassigned if their school does not perform well on district tests. And in New York State, a “takeover” policy has been established to close down low-performing schools, remove

administrators and teachers, and then reopen them with a new name or number and a new cadre of teachers and administrators. The new staff members are generally given just two to three years to improve the test scores or lose their positions.⁷

While such external pressures increase attention to student performance and have the potential to mobilize energies to overcome forces that seek to maintain the status quo, linking sanctions and rewards to test performance creates overwhelmingly dysfunctional effects. Among other things, such linking encourages teaching to the test, cheating, the use of teacher-proof materials, investments in testing at the expense of teacher learning, and overreliance on test scores to make decisions about students’ futures.

Problem 3. Teaching to the test. Even when the tests feature demonstrations of how students can apply important skills and knowledge in lifelike situations, the pressure to perform well on them seems to compel school personnel to rely heavily on test-prep materials, often at the expense of engaging in “real instruction.” In studies of Kentucky’s assessment system, for example, researchers found that the test-related sanctions and rewards for teachers influenced them to “focus on whatever is thought to raise test scores rather than on instruction aimed at addressing individual student needs.”⁸

Problem 4. Cheating on the rise. In other places and situations, associating high stakes with test scores has tempted school personnel to cheat and to manipulate test results



“No, wait! I’ve published! I’ve published!”

by keeping certain students out of the testing pool.⁹ In some districts, school officials are even under criminal investigation for tampering with the scores they reported for their state tests.¹⁰

Problem 5. Teacher-proofing instructional programs. In the quest for “magic bullets” to improve test scores, some schools and districts are returning to “teacher-proof” solutions used in decades past. The fear of public humiliation or of losing one’s job is leading principals and superintendents to resort to unusual degrees of intervention into the daily lives of teachers and students. Rather than focusing their efforts on strengthening teachers’ professional knowledge, administrators are enacting policies that place teachers in the role of

compliant technicians who must follow the rules to produce better results. Many administrators are requiring teachers to use standardized, highly structured curricula or to follow pacing schedules that dictate what page of the text each class should be on for each day of the school year.

For example, the Chicago Public Schools created a curriculum in the fall of 1999 that spelled out in detail for each day what students should be learning, what questions teachers should ask, and which parts of district and state tests each lesson addresses. The curriculum is designed to provide the superintendent with information about what the topic is for each day in every discipline and in every grade. On “day 13” of the 1999-2000 school year, for example, the fourth-graders were to be revising writing samples, while the second-graders were to be practicing soft vowel sounds.¹¹

Other districts are taking similar routes. Rather than supporting teachers as they work to embody the standards in the curricula they create, districts are buying “Cadillac” versions of commercial texts that are accompanied by a slew of workbooks, assessment systems, and other related materials that promise to prepare students to meet state standards if only everyone buys and completes everything. While some teachers welcome these structured curriculum plans as helpful guides, others see their purchase as an excessive intrusion. As one educator complained, “It’s cookie-cutter curriculum. Every child’s development is different and individualized. More focus should be placed on helping teachers assess where and why students have difficulties and less on test preparation.”¹²

As a result of this press to standardize teaching “inputs”

in the hopes of producing better standardized “outcomes,” many educators are being forced not only to relinquish their individual teaching styles but also to pace their instruction according to district mandates rather than in response to their students’ needs. Some educators have even abandoned teaching practices that have been nationally recognized and recommended. Upper Arlington, Ohio, is one of many districts that have dismantled integrated curricula and multi-age classrooms because of the pressures of state testing.

Problem 6. Investing in testing instead of teaching and

Many administrators are enacting policies that place teachers in the role of compliant technicians.

learning. The quest for higher test scores has led still other districts and schools to invest their limited funds on more testing rather than on helping teachers learn how to teach in more effective ways. Some districts are adding testing at grade levels that are not covered by their state’s assessment system. (Not coincidentally, in many places, these additional tests are produced by the same companies that produce the state exams.) During a visit I made to a school recently, a teacher complained to me about the commercial test that her district was requiring her to administer to her class. It cost \$250 for the class set, more money than she receives to purchase classroom materials for an entire school year! Her comments demonstrated her understanding of the need to invest in resources rather than tests to produce better student results: “If this money were given to me to buy more books and materials for my students or to sponsor professional development opportunities for me and my colleagues, I could do a far better job of preparing my students for the upcoming test than more test practice will ever do.”

Sometimes the “more testing” approach to meeting accountability pressures comes from district or building administrators rather than directly from the state. In Texas, where the pressure of the state test is extremely strong, some principals require their entire school to devote as much as half a day a week exclusively to test practice throughout the school year. In some districts in New York City, teachers are directed by their principals or superintendents to spend all their instructional time in the months closest to state tests only on test-preparation activities.

Problem 7. Relying on a single test for high-stakes de-

cisions. In states and districts where new external, standards-based tests are being mandated as the only acceptable measure of student and school achievement, state-mandated graduation exams threaten to dismantle innovative teaching and assessment practices that many teachers and schools have spent years developing and that have proved to be successful with struggling student populations. This is especially true of tests in disciplines like history and science, which still focus predominantly on students' abilities to retain massive amounts of information and to demonstrate their retention of these facts in just one way. Requiring that teachers, schools, and students demonstrate standards in only one narrowly defined way negates efforts to forge new ways for broader groups of students to experience success. Mandating that a test result is the only way to demonstrate that standards have been met threatens to leave behind those who are better able to demonstrate what they know and can do through a project, an essay, an invention, or a presentation.

The process of teaching and learning is much too complex to be captured in a single, sit-down, externally mandated, high-stakes test. A recent position statement issued jointly by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement and Evaluation argues for flexibility in our assessment/accountability systems.¹³ It seeks to foster alternative ways for students and schools to demonstrate common goals. If we do not allow such flexibility, then, in the name of high standards, we will be settling for much less.

CREATING FAIR AND EQUITABLE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

To oppose high-stakes tests is not to oppose assessment or accountability. Rather, opposing high-stakes tests affirms the need to have accountability mechanisms that are fair. Fair accountability acknowledges the social inequalities in our nation. It uncouples high stakes from high standards. It uses standards and assessments to give us information that can improve student learning. Fair accountability relies on standards and assessments as just one source of information that can be used, in conjunction with other kinds of information, to make decisions about students' futures and to allocate support for students and schools.

We cannot help students meet more challenging goals without providing more resources to support their learning. It is cruel and unfair to demand more rigorous standards for students without at the same time providing them with the resources they need to accomplish these goals.

This means ensuring that *all* students have access to schools with adequate funding, smaller classes, updated books, technology, and other learning materials; to school environments that are caring and safe; and to teachers who have the knowledge, skills, and desire to support them in their learning.

We must also find meaningful ways to assess these aspects of schooling. Rather than hold only students accountable for what they know and can do, educators, communities, and the public must also be held accountable for the quality of the education that students are given. Without holding our education systems accountable for that, we have no right to ask more of our students.

Standards for opportunities to learn. If we want students to learn more effectively, we need to invest in incentives and supports to redirect teaching practice so that it will produce more successful outcomes. When a farmer wants to produce a blue-ribbon pig, he does more than simply weigh his pig repeatedly. He feeds the pig and tends to the pig. We, too, need to nourish our students, not simply measure them, by enriching the learning environments in which they spend so many precious hours of their lives.

In his 1991 book, Jonathan Kozol documented the "savage inequalities" of our national education system. He told stories of how, within the boundaries of the same district or state, some students attended schools with state-of-the-art science laboratories, well-stocked libraries, and multimillion-dollar art facilities, while others attended schools



that were crumbling, overcrowded, and vastly under-resourced.¹⁴ These differences in learning conditions can be traced to other inequalities — in per-pupil expenditures, in median teacher salaries, and in teacher retention rates. For example, just within New York State in 1997, per-pupil expenditures in different districts ranged from \$5,973 to \$34,623, median teacher salaries ranged from \$29,605 to \$75,206, and teacher turnover rates ranged from 4% a year to 29%. In some districts only 25% of teachers were fully certified, whereas in others 94% of teachers held permanent certification.¹⁵

Similar situations exist in other states, where, in urban areas, there is a 30% to 40% vacancy rate for bilingual and English-as-a-second-language teachers. And child poverty is as high as 47% in Detroit, 43% in Atlanta, and 38% in Milwaukee.¹⁶

How does a national focus on externally mandated standards address these disparities and support better teaching and learning for all students? To ensure that standards get used in helpful ways, they need to be linked to other kinds of standards — standards for opportunities to learn and standards for professional practice. Opportunity-to-learn standards have to do with ensuring that all students have equal and adequate fiscal resources, access to well-prepared teachers, and access to high-quality curricula, instructional materials, and technologies. Many argue that high standards for all can never be achieved unless these issues are addressed.¹⁷ Some even argue that what is really needed to achieve high standards for all students goes far beyond attention to the education system and includes attention to all our societal institutions, including those that deal with our health and our social environments. Only such a comprehensive approach will allow all individuals to reach their potential.¹⁸

Standards for practice. In addition to establishing standards for access to the conditions that allow learning to flourish, standards for practice are also needed to fulfill schools' responsibility to serve children well. These standards emphasize the school practices that are likely to support students' achievement of high standards. They include such features as schools that emphasize trust and respect; school and class sizes that allow all students to be known well; curricula that are rich and challenging; teaching that is responsive to students' cultures, needs, and understandings;

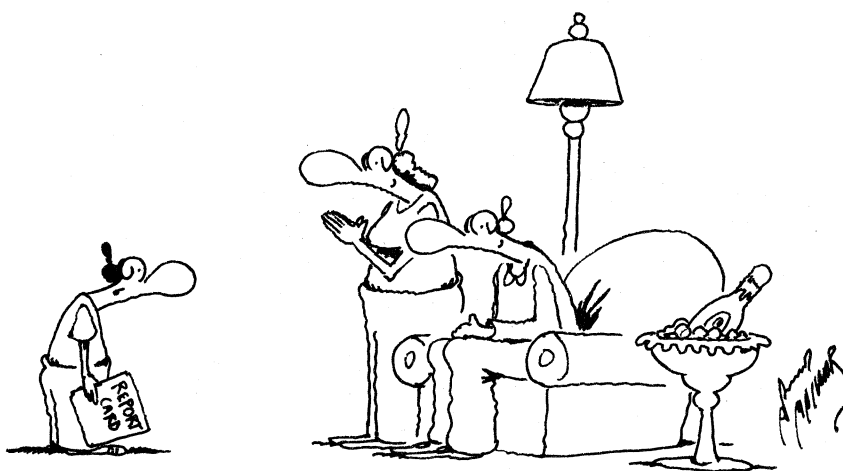
and instruction that is effective in guiding, sustaining, and focusing learning in the context of clear images of excellence and a belief in the human potential to learn.¹⁹

STANDARDS-BASED INITIATIVES THAT SERVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

When worthy standards promote effective teaching, are evaluated by assessments that are standards-based and performance-oriented, and are surrounded by supportive policies, they can be of enormous benefit to teaching and learning. Such standards initiatives strengthen professionalism by helping teachers to clarify goals and develop shared meanings, to focus their teaching with clear expectations, to use evidence as the basis for evaluation, and to enhance their understanding of how students learn.

Clarifying goals and developing shared meanings. Standards challenge educators to clarify their expectations for learning and to define what these expectations mean for their teaching. In the process, they develop shared understandings and a common language for their work. As a result, schools develop more coherent programs of instruction — both within and across grades.

Conceived in this manner, standards do not have to lead to the standardization that characterizes so many so-called standards-based reforms. If the focus of standards-based work is on promoting coherent goals, not cookie-cutter curriculum, then it can actually free educators from standardized teaching so that they can adjust instruction to their students' diverse needs. Depending on the school's orientation and the teachers' experience, confidence, or inspira-



"Mom. Dad. I think your expectations may be a little too high."

tion, the same standards can be taught in a variety of ways, ranging from project-based learning in the community to direct instruction in the classroom.

Guiding teaching with clear expectations. Standards help teachers by reminding them of important skills, knowledge, and dispositions that they need to include in their teaching. This deepens their knowledge of what they are teaching and makes it easier for them to communicate their expectations for students' work. Related standards-based assessments also guide teaching by describing in rubrics or scoring guides what teachers need to nurture in students at each stage of their development.

For students, too, standards are helpful because they articulate expectations in advance. When educators spell out criteria for high-quality work, explain how that work will be assessed, and provide examples of what that work looks like, students have a better sense of what to do and how to do it. This guides their learning and spurs them to achieve. Teachers confirm that "when expectations are very clear, more students seem to meet them."²⁰

Using evidence as the basis for evaluation. In much the same way that physicians gather evidence to diagnose and treat patients, standards-based teaching calls on teachers to use evidence, rather than personal feelings, as the basis for their evaluations. Teachers move away from evaluating student work by simple A, B, C, or D grades and toward providing instructive comments about how students can improve. This more effective teaching leads to better learning.

Enhancing knowledge about how students learn. When performance assessments are used to evaluate whether standards have been met, teachers get a window into *what* their students know and can do, as well as *how* their students actually do it. This heightens teachers' awareness of both group and individual needs and so enhances their ability to individualize instruction and expands their range of instructional strategies. Standards-based teaching thus launches a shift from "teacher as activity planner" to "teacher as assessor." One teacher explains, "When students are expected to explain or support their answers, you begin to learn more about what they understand."²¹

The more in-depth look at children's thinking that evolves from standards-based work helps educators focus on what students *can* do, rather than only on what they *can't* do. A deeper respect develops for the strengths of formerly unnoticed students and for the variety of ways in which students solve problems, express ideas, and demonstrate excellence.

Strengthening professionalism and facilitating change. As educators discuss, debate, and share ideas about stan-

dards-based initiatives, they learn from one another and begin to address collective challenges. What do we want our students to know and be able to do (content standards)? What does that look like (performance standards)? What do we need to do to ensure that all students meet these goals (opportunity-to-learn standards)? How are we going to help students who still have not met a given standard after repeated attempts to do so? As educators reflect on what they do, they develop their own distinctive practices and cultures. Strengthened professionalism is the result, and it often leads to productive change.

SUPPORTING TEACHERS AND HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING

A focus on how to improve teaching is central to efforts to improve student learning. Increasingly, studies are revealing that students' learning is powerfully affected by the expertise of their teachers.²² The ability of schools and school systems to help all students reach for and achieve high levels of performance depends on the existence of teachers who are knowledgeable about the critical elements of learning and who can employ the strategies that are needed to connect those elements to the understandings of diverse learners.

Standards and standards-based performance assessments help teachers develop this knowledge and these skills. By clarifying goals and purposes, by making expectations explicit, by requiring knowledge to be applied in real-life contexts, and by providing many different ways to demonstrate abilities and skills, well-designed standards-based reforms can lay the groundwork for better teaching. When teachers are asked to examine the work of their students in relation to standards, they increase their knowledge of individual students, become better informed about their students' capacities, and receive guidance about what they need to do next to support students' forward development. While using standards in this way does not guarantee that teachers will make the necessary connections with the understandings of their students that result in genuine learning, doing so certainly can point teaching in that direction.

The challenge for teacher educators and schools of education is to harness this power. They can do so by incorporating knowledge of standards-based reforms into teacher preparation programs. Teacher educators can model how standards and standards-based assessments can be used in the service of learning, and they can inform prospective teachers about the complexities as well as the dangers of initiatives being carried out in the name of standards-based reforms. In this way, prospective teachers can

be prepared to make the best use of what standards offer.

Standards and standards-based assessments will not support better learning if their success is measured solely by a single test or if they are used simply to allocate rewards and sanctions, to determine automatic grade retentions, or to withhold diplomas. Standards and standards-based assessments will not support better learning unless they are carried out in the context of raising standards for the whole system. In this context, they can be catalysts for a range of improvements. Standards can challenge us to answer such questions as, If all students must learn to standards, how does that affect the way we organize time, professional development for staff members (principals and central office staff as well as teachers), the distribution of resources, the use of computers and distance learning, report cards, parent involvement, press coverage of education, state legislation, teacher preparation and licensure, and postsecondary education?

Standards can support better learning if they are used to direct teaching toward worthy goals, to promote teaching that is responsive to the ways students learn, to examine students in ways that can be used to inform instruction, to keep students and parents apprised of progress, to trigger special supports for students who need them, and to evaluate school practices. If all these aspects of the standards/assessments/accountability picture are addressed, standards and standards-based assessments have the potential to be of enormous benefit to teaching and learning.

Well-developed standards- and performance-based assessments can initiate a dynamic process that has the potential to transform the culture of teaching — from teacher preparation programs to the work of experienced teachers. Standards-based reforms can help support a new vision of teaching, one that weaves teaching, learning, and assessment into a seamless web. This linkage of standards, assessments, and teaching practices can provide a guide for teachers and students to use in monitoring and taking responsibility for their own learning. If the expectations are appropriate, the evaluations are fair, and the environment is kept risk-free, then teachers and children will feel comfortable and confident, and they will grow. A variety of pathways to learning will be opened up. Success will be demystified and made attainable, and effort will be the primary requirement. This is what genuine accountability should be: a learning experience for all who are involved.

1. Linda Darling-Hammond and Beverly Falk, "Using Standards and Assessments to Support Student Learning," *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 1997, pp. 190-99.

2. Beverly Falk, *The Heart of the Matter: Using Standards and Assessments to Learn* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2000).

3. Quoted in Maxine Greene, *Landscapes of Learning* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1978), p. 80.
4. "Critics: Old Style Tests May Hamper School Reform," *Education USA*, 19 April 1999, pp. 1, 3.
5. Richard Gibson, "The Impact of Testing in Michigan," *FairTest Examiner*, Spring 1999, p. 3.
6. See Darling-Hammond and Falk, op. cit.; Walter Haney, "Study of Texas Education Agency Statistics on Cohorts of Texas High School Students, 1997-1998," unpublished paper, Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass., 1999; Jay Heubert and Robert Hauser, eds., *High Stakes: Testing for Tracking, Promotion, and Graduation* (Washington, D.C.: National Research Council, 1998); and Linda McNeil, *Contradictions of School Reform: Educational Costs of Standardized Testing* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
7. Kerry A. White and Robert C. Johnston, "Summer School: Amid Successes, Concerns Persist," *Education Week*, 22 September 1999, pp. 1, 8-9.
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